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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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A low residue diet

Certain foods containing fibre help the movement of food and fluid through your digestive tract. These foods leave behind 'residue' after digestion.

You have been told that you need a test or an operation and that your bowel needs to be emptied, therefore the amount of 'residue' in your digestive tract needs to be reduced. A low residue diet is a **temporary** diet (usually up to three days). This diet makes sure that the bowel is free from faeces (stool), which will allow the examination or surgery to take place.

During your admission meals will be sent to you from the catering department from a special 'low residue' menu. The range of foods on a low residue diet is very limited but this is a necessary temporary restriction.

Foods allowed on this diet are:

- boiled/poached egg
- boiled potato
- white bread
- clear soup
- grilled/poached fish or chicken
- sugar
- clear jelly.

Drinks allowed on this diet are:

- tea/coffee without milk
- meat extract drinks
- water.

Incomplete digestion of meat, milk and dairy products, ice cream, butter, margarine, fats and oils all produce a residue. Bacteria in the large intestine feed off this which increases faecal bulk. This is why these foods need to be omitted on a low residue diet.

A low residue diet differs from a low fibre diet, which will still produce some bulk in the large intestine. If a low fibre diet is needed, further advice will be provided by the dietitian.